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A N
OLD WAY
 OF ENDING
NEW CONTROVERSIES;
 IN A
SERMON
 PREACHED

To the **COMPTROLLER**, and the
 rest of the Gentlemen of the Honourable
 Society of the *Inner-Temple* :
 On *Sunday* the 8th of *January* 168¹/₂. and at
 their special Desire Printed.

By **THOMAS PITTIS**, D. D. one of His Ma-
 jesties Chaplains in Ordinary.

*Quisquis ab Ecclesia segregatus adulteræ jungitur, à promissis Ec-
 clesie separatur.* Cypr. *De Unitat. Eccles.* Catb. Pag. 181.

Ἀμεινον ὁ Ἰδωρ τάλαντι, ἢ ὁ σφαιρὴ τὸ λεῦθε μαθεῖν
Isidor. Pelusiot. Epist. Lib. 4. Epist. 67.

LONDON,
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H. P. (w. 25. 2nd 1/2 182)

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To the Honourable the Comptrol-
ler, and the rest of the Socie-
ty of the INNER TEMPLE.

Gentlemen,

That I expose an accidental Ser-
mon to the world, who have al-
waies been so shie and wary; is only from
the force of your command, delivered
to me with that usual state (though
complement too) which became men
who at the time of preaching it had
the Government of their house in their
own hands. I owe much excuse to the
world but cannot reasonably owe any to
you, because your Judg^{mt} upon it ju-
stified the Discourse; and your Autho-
rity enjoin'd me to deliver up the Copy.
I was the more encouraged to do it,
because I heard you had made a
Loyal Address to the King; with

which, I hope the Sermon doth not interfere. If you, or others may receive Advantage by the Perusal, I care not whether it please the Multitude or no ; (for Physick is not acceptable to the Patient) but shall rest satisfied that I have observed your Commands: and that a Learned Body of Ingenious and Gentile Men are engag'd to defend it, whilst I remain,

Gentlemen,

Jan. 13. 1682.

Your most Obliged , and most

Obedient Servant,

THO. PITTIS.



1 John 2. 24. former part.

*Let that therefore abide in you which
ye have heard from the beginning.*

Amongst all those various broods of
Sects that ignorance and wilfulness
have spawned in the World, there
is none but is covetous that Antiquity
should Patronize it ; never decrying its
venerable Testimony, nor fearing its ora-
culous Answers, but when they distrust its
votes opposite to their present espousals ;
Gray hairs being as well the Glory of an
Opinion, as the Crown of the Old man.
Hence is it that both Nations and Families
have had such severe Contests with each
other, concerning the time of their first
rise, that from thence their Pedegree may
appear Ancient, and they might gain re-
nown from the date of their Original.

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And as in Persons and Opinions, so in things too, *quo antiquius eò melius*, by how much the more Ancient a thing is, by so much the more is it prized and valued by those that covet a strict inspection into the Periods that did preceed their own, who measure the proportions of an infant World, and thus antedate their own Beings: How precious is a Script of *Trismegistus*? Or the least Workmanship of an inspired *Bezaleel*? The smallest Leaf of *Solomon's* Herbal would be deemed a Present Noble enough for the greatest Monarch; How do we prize an old piece of *Roman* Coin? Or an antiquated *Grecian* Monument? Nor is this a Truth receiving a general impress and confirmation, in respect of Artificial and Philosophical Objects; but even Divinity too, having for its Author the Ancient of Days, values that which carries Age furrowed in its Face, and has Gravity and Years visible on its Brow: And nothing seems more to asperse and disparage whatever wears the Title of Religion than to accuse it of Novelty, and to bear the date of a late Invention:

tion : Hence *Haman* endeavoured from this Topick to brand the *Jews*, in that they used other Customs different from the ancient Laws of the *Persians*, that their Novelty might render them odious to the King, being a crime it seems sufficient to ruin them, when *Mordecai* could not bow to so insulting a Favorite : St. *Paul* when he Preached the Gospel at *Athens*, had pre-Esther 3.
 judice raised against the Truth of his Doctrine, by affirming him only to be a setter forth of strange Gods, and introducing new propositions into the World; *Celsus* when he professedly wrote against the Truth and Divinity of the Christian Institutions, thought he had cast sufficient blemish and contempt upon its Authority, when he had satisfied the World that it was new and unheard of : And *Eusebius* Orig. contra Celsum, Lib. I.
 assures us that it was a common stratagem, and usual contrivance for the Christian Religion from its first entrance, to be reproached with its strangeness and novelty ; all mankind (as it seems) measuring the truth of things by their Antiquity, and general reception ; and if we approach nearer to

our own Confines we shall find the two great struglers for the Western Empire of Conscience and Religion, still endeavour to Crown their Opinions with old Age, and to gain both Strength and Honour to their Establishment from time and duration. The *Romans* would have the World to understand that the Pillars of their Church were founded with Christianity, and that our Saviour himself once held those Keys which he afterwards delivered to the Papal Succession. But though they had a firm Foundation, they have built upon it a tottering Superstructure. The Protestant would willingly obliterate the odium of a late Reformation, and will antedate *Luther* and the *German* heats, searching in the midst of a bloody Inquisition; some being willing to Travel to *Bohemia* to derive their Principles from *John Hus*, and *Jerom* of *Prague*, not only sending us to our own *Wiccliffe*, but eating through the Mountains to find out the more Ancient (though obscure) *Waldenses*: others (and that more justly too) as if all this will not yet evince their Principles

ciples Aged, will Travel farther to the Churches Cradle, and find out the Manger in which our Saviour himself was laid, and from his Mouth receive their Doctrine, reviving what might seem dead, having for some time been buried in the dust and rubbish of mens Inventions; and freeing it from those Burdens and Corruptions which a gainful Interest, and bold Presumption had loaded it withal, thus cause that to abide in them which Christians heard from the beginning.

Antiquity then being so powerful a motive to persuade to Religion, that all strive to catch and grasp it; I shall easily prevail for a diligent attention since what I deliver shall be that which has been heard from the beginning.

In which Text we have an Exhortation both Grave and Seasonable; Grave it is, avoiding those levities and varnish which Novices use to wrap their late and uncouth Opinions in, that they may be snatched at with the more greedy Appetite: As Physicians put their bitter Pills in sweet Conserve that the Patient may swallow them
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with the greater delight : and seasonable was this advice too ; since *Simon*, and the *Gnosticks*, did now attempt the murdering Christianity when it was just born ; as *Herods* cruelty, drinking in, with an insatiable thirst, the blood of Infants, would have Crucified our Saviour in his Cradle, before Age had given him Strength and Stature, not only to publish his Fathers Message, but even to bear his own Cross. Nay least this accursed, and Antichristian Sect, provoking their desires to unlawful Lusts, detracting from Christianity by an impious and incoherent intermixture of Jewish and Heathen Rites and Practices, with what was now Solemn in its proposal, and Sacred by its establishment, should not be able to impede, or retard, the most glorious flourish of Gospel Truth, and forbid the spreading of the Christian Church, that Noble Vine but newly Planted ; *Cerintus* also now advanced, with all the wild Boars of the Forrest, if possibly, to undermine and root her up, denying the Divinity of its first Author : An Heretick so foul and polluted,

luted, that the blessed Pen-man of my present Text would not come into the same Bath in which the wicked *Cerintus* washed, least he should be defiled with that water which had touched so filthy and loathsome a Carcass; and the Bath it self, sensible of its own pollution, should immediately fall to make a Grave for its self and possessours.

In the Exhortation then there are three Parts presented to our view (1.) A Duty, *Let that therefore abide in you*, (2.) Its Object, *Which ye have heard*, (Lastly) The Motive and Inducement to the Duty, *Because it was from the beginning*.

I must crave leave to invert the Parts, though it shall make no alteration in the Sence; that first the Object being explained, and the Motive proposed, the Duty may be with the greater facility pressed and embraced. (1.) Then, Let the Object in the Text exhibite it self; and this is nothing but what ye have already heard. As Faith it self is generated by the Ear, so what you have heard is nothing else but the Object of your Faith; for thus does the
Apostle

Apostle conclude the inference; *Faith cometh by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God*, (Rom. 10. 17.) But as Hearing is the Conduit to convey Faith, so sometimes is it the decoy to infidelity; because there are many false Prophets gone forth into the World; and a seeming truth may make the same impression with truth it self. Nay, our blessed Saviour, that he might not leave us without due Caution, has informed all Ages and Generations, that there shall arise false Christs, and false Prophets; yea! and shall superadd Wonders to their Oratory, not only to amuse the World, but to gain credit and reputation to their Doctrine; insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall prevail to the dismal shaking of the strongest Oakes, and the rooting up the tallest Cedars of *Libanus*; even to the putting a falacy upon the very Elect, (*Matth. 24. 24.*) The Ear of Man, being the recepticle of all Sounds, no wonder that it admits the sounding Brass and tinckling Cymbal, as well as the Trumpets of the Sanctuary. *Simon Magus* may be as welcome to the *Samaritans*,

ritans, as *Paul* and *Barnabas* to the Disciples at *Antioch*. If a vain-glorious *Herod* has but Confidence enough to make an Oration, though repugnant to the first Principles of Religion, nor wonder that it makes such an impress upon the Multitude, that they give shouts, with the loudest Acclamations, and attribute to him the Wisdom of a Deity, who is scarce endowed with the Prudence of a Man; (*Acts* 12. 22.) If a mechanick Silversmith, prompted with no other motive than what Avarice and Interest can dictate, shall confidently plead for the Shrines of *Diana*; the clamorous Multitude shall soon cry out, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*, (*Acts* 19. 28.) So easily captivated are vulgar Affections, and of so slender a value is popular Applause. The mutable Croud will change their Religion with their Garments, and is of that still which is of the newest fashion. As if *novitas essendi* were the Being of Devotion, and Age were not the Measure of Divinity. As if the newest Stamp were to be deemed alwaies the truest Metal; and the last dictate of a fallacious

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cious Understanding were the best object for the Wills embracement: Then indeed our Saviours Argument would be nothing but a Sophism against Pharisaical Devources; *From the beginning 'twas not so, (Matth. 19. 8.)* nor would the Advice in the Text be solid; *Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning.*

But it is not every thing that pleases the Ear that must be closeted and lodged in the Heart, lest Tares being sowed amongst the Corn, they spread, and flourish, and o'er-shadow the Grain: Our Saviour therefore knowing our promptitude to imbibe what might seem pleasant, and to swallow Poyson if wrap'd up in gilded Pills; leaves a grave and severe Caveat, *Take heed what ye hear, (Mark 4. 24.)* and lest our strict observation of the matter should make us regardless of the manner of performance; St. Luke delivers it, *Take heed how you hear; (Luke 8. 18.)* As well knowing that too too few look to their Feet when they approach the Sanctuary of the Lord, but are more ready to offer the Sacrifice of Fools, then to hear their Vices redargued as they ought;

ought; not allowing themselves so much either of time, or seriousness, as to consider that they do evil. These are such Auditors as St. *Austin* reprehends, *Audientes corporis sensu qui non audiunt cordis assensu*; Aug. de bono periever. lib. 2. cap. 14. who use the Word and Doctrine of the Gospel only as an Ornament to deck the Head, not as a foundation to establish the Heart; that hang it only as a Jewel in the Ear, but reserve it not as a choice treasure to enrich the Soul; whose practice is just opposite to St. *James's* advice, they will not lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, that they may receive with meekness the engrafted Word which is able to save their Souls; (*James* 1. 21.) Too too many sooner bow their Ears to what may irritate and provoke their lust; to the frothy discourses of deceitful Tongues; to bold Rants, and jovial Catches; to those lewd Sonnets that are the loose compositions of looser brains, which being heated with vice, boil over in scum and filth: men are more attentive to new Oaths, and unheard of Blasphemies; to such as jest, and droll down Religion, that it may no

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longer interrupt the pleasant wickedness of a degenerated Age; to such as are so hardy as to Lampoon Heaven, and make Satyrs against the Quire above; that would, if either method might prevail, Flout, or Hector, God Almighty from his Throne; whose Language is more exalted than rayling *Rabshekehs*. These, that are spots in our Feasts of Charity, become the only Persons worthy of Entertainment; their black Language is viewed, and gazed on, as the brightest Oracles; every shrug raises admiration, and a little smile is enough to authorize a great jest: as if these wandering Comets were of more solidity than the fixed Stars; and the Language of Hell to be more diligently attended than the Voice of Heaven. God at once pardon and remedy it. The Ambassadors of the Most High may take up the Lamentation of him that first gave them their Commission. *To whom shall we speak and give warning that they may hear? Behold their Ear is Uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken; Behold the word of the Lord is to them a reproach;*

reproach; they have no delight in it.
(Jer. 6. 10.)

Some indeed are much for the Ear; attending to those scandals and reproaches that the envious man will cast upon him whom his malice ruins, or his ambition undermines: others, even in Sacred things, reduce devotion all to the Ear; and when God, principally requires the Heart in Prayer, these will give little else but the Ear in Hearing; being as partial in their Sacrifices towards God, as they are in their Censures towards their Neighbours, as if the Decalogue were now abolished, and the only Command were, *Hear O Israel.* 'Twas the error of the *Euchites* to be always Praying, and 'tis as great an error to be always Hearing: as if the School of our Saviour should not only be enjoyned Biennial silence, but be for ever mute. *Porphyry* indeed, (that great Blasphemer, big with malice against the Heavens) when checks of Conscience forced him to speak out something of the results of his own Reason, teacheth us to Sacrifice our Souls to God in silence with Chast thoughts;
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How Chast men are at those seasons that ought to be attended with Solemnity, and Devotion, it would be presumption in any to judg : but sure I am that they put in practice this sage advice of their Father *Porphyry*, who thus pretend to Worship God in silence: As if he that made the Tongue as well as the Ear, did not require the one to make Oblations of Prayer and Praise, as well as the other to Hear his Word ; or he that Created the whole man would be contented with a partial Sacrifice. And now if any one has Ears to hear let him hear ; and not only so, but retain also what he has heard ; so will the Exhortation in my Text be embraced : *Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning.*

Having thus endeavoured to free mankind from such diseases and distempers in Religion ; I must now crave leave to attempt the recommendation of our duty ; and persuade men to the diligent attention to that Sacred Word, which is able to make us wise unto Salvation, and be greedy to receive it, when not extended in

in an adulterated hand : For as we cannot hear without a Preacher, so he cannot Preach that is not sent, (*Rom. 10. 15.*) Some men are like those large tongued women in *Tertullians* time, who though a person of excellent Language, was yet forced to inveigh against them that being so liberal of their Speech in Private, conjectured they had, if not Rhetorick, and Reason, yet yet words enough, to declame in Publick ; whom the Father reprehends in this Prohibition : *Non permittitur mulieri in Ecclesiâ loqui, sed nec docere, nec tingere ; nec offerre ; nec ullius virilis muneris, nedum sacerdotalis officii, sortem tibi vindicare :* or like those that *St. Austin* complains of, in the second Chapter of his first Book of the *Trinity*, that are *garruli ratiocinatores, elatiores quam capaciores* ; that are prating Disputants, more shrill than rational : How many dismal mourning souls, whose Education never advanced them to any degree above Mechanism, steal away the Priests Office, as *Neanthus* did *Orpheus's* Harps, who thinking to effect the same wonders *Orpheus* did, and make Woods
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*Tert. de præ.
Scrip. hæ. et.
cap. 41.*

*Tert. de virg.
velandis, cap. 9.*

and Trees dance after his melody, played so ill, that the very Dogs, being affrighted at his strange noise, tore him all in pieces. When we hear therefore, we must not throw away our attention upon usurping Schismatics; whose very Preaching is their Crime, because without a Sacred and Divine Commission; and since giving them Audience is their encouragement, it can no less involve such easie Auditors in a snare and guilt.

And yet, since the Text exhibits something that always has been heard, it does not only imply our duty of attention, but presents us with what we ought to hear; and thats the Gospel; what both the Apostles and Disciples were acquainted with from the beginning: And since, in that Sacred Testimony to our Saviour, there are various Truths which make up its Contexture; those things are first to be heard and received that are in themselves most Fundamental; *Primarium dogma de Christi divinitate*, (says *Justinian*) the chief Doctrine of the Divinity of our Saviour, without which the Foundation being sunk, the whole

whole fabrick must of necessity be demolished: For since his Divinity gives merit to his Passion, by which his temporal punishment bears proportion to an infinite offence; detract from his Deity and you spot his sufferings; and then if he be a Lamb with blemish, though he be slain, he cannot satisfie; and so the series of our Salvation becomes disordered, and our eternal safety undermined.

And now perhaps some wise person might take advantage to exhibite, or adventure at a Catalogue of Fundamentals; and a clamorous Adversary might with as much confidence and triumph demand them; but when we receive a particular of Explicits, we may then attempt a Catalogue of Fundamentals. In the meantime, since Faith is the general condition of the Gospel; and, *He that believeth, and and is baptised, shall be saved* (Mark. 16. 16.) Methinks we need disturb our selves no further for Fundamentals, than to define what compleats that one thing, Faith. And though Interest and Opinion have rendered it as different from it self as one

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mans fancy from another, and we have created almost as many varieties of Faith, not only as there are Nations in the world, but men too ; (multitudes dealing by it as *Caligula* did by the Image of *Jupiter Olympiacus* when he took from it its head of Gold, and put upon it an head of Brass ;) yet if we will admit the Father of the Faithful : to explain the difficulty, we shall find that the practice of the Patriarch *Abraham*, (who is exhibited as a pattern for Gospel believers ;) will give us a prospect of that Faith which had its being from the beginning. And though there are many acts of this ancient Faith presented to our perusal in New Testament Pages, yet there are two comprehensive of all the rest, to wit Belief and Obedience. For when he to whom all things are possible, had promised a branch should sprout forth from this dry Root ; and that he would be his shield, and great reward (*Gen. 15. 1.*) *Abraham* did not question the word of a Deity, who, he knew, was able to controul the world, and alter the power of second Causes according to the
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the pleasure of his own will: but stedfastly assented to the truth of what God had promised; relying on it with Faith and Expectation. And as this Action includes belief of the Promises, so the second prescribes obedience to the Commands; and it was that work which St. *James* says justified him, even the offering up his Son *Isaac* upon the Altar (*Jam.* 2. 21.) So that to sum up the whole Gospel in one word, that you may here have presented in an Epitome, what I humbly beg may abide in you: He that believes the Promises, so as to obey the Precepts; that accepts his Saviour as a King to rule, and a Prophet to teach, as well as a Priest to make atonement; and, consequently, submits to the authority of his Laws, and to the conduct of his Ministry and Discipline; that relies upon the merits of his Cross, and pursues the steps of his vertuous Life, in order to the securing his eternal Safety: He is the Person who retains what he has already heard; and he need not fear any deceitfull Imposition, since he embraces that which was from the beginning. Which

minds me of the Motive here proposed, to fortifie our resolutions, that what we have heard may abide in us, since it is no more than what was delivered from the beginning.

In Philosophical Propositions we usually deem those most certain that later experiments prove, and evince : but, in Divine Truths, those are best that were from the beginning. Time, which is in a continued flux, being in this like the swiftest Torrents, that carry down to us what is light and frothy; but sink that which is grave and ponderous : and indeed Reason, which is the result of our nobler part, if not disturbed by passion or interest, is the surest guide in the midst of perplexities ; and this does, upon the first prospect of Religion, lead us to that which was from the beginning. And Christianity being that which pretends to be first begotten in Heaven, though brought forth here on Earth, owning not less than a God for its Author, whose great propositions are made up of Eternal Truths ; and since the Apostles were inspired to a compleat delivery of what

what was at first Preached by our Saviour, the same Doctrine, by a continued succession; having been derived and conveyed to Posterity ; it follows, by an inevitable conclusion, that the surest way, for us, to whom these Principles are exhibited, when any Objection, or different Opinion, presents it self, to startle our apprehensions ; is to pursue the first Rule, and follow that which was delivered from the beginning.

But since the various subdivisions of those that intitle themselves to the names of Christians, pretend to those infallible Maxims treasured up in the Sacred Book ; there must be left a Judg of Controversies ; or else there will remain no way of freedom from present disturbances, or certain method of reducing those who, being too fond of their own fancies, resolutely adhere to their private Opinions, to the detriment of Christianity, and ruin of themselves, and the obstruction of Peace and Unity in the world. The Doctrine of the Gospel, although certain in it self, being conveyed to us in Words
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and Language which may admit of different Constructions, suitable either to the use of words, or the apprehensions of men, cannot, (without such a judgment upon it as may oblige the various extravagancies of mankind to silence, and a passive submission, whatever may be their internal belief;) be sufficient Clue to lead us out of these Labyrinths: Though had the multitude of its Followers justly measured and proportioned Understandings, rightly to discern the Fruits wrapped in those Leaves, it must appear to every man, the best, and only Conductor in the world. But, because every person usurps Authority to interpret, and every Illiterate and Enthusiastical head, if he has not reason to confirm his Gloss, has confidence however to pretend an Inspiration; necessity inforces us to seek some method to quiet our minds, and to allay the briskness of our own fancies, and those heats and fury, that our warmer contrivances introduce into the world: that so we may arrive at such certainty as is possible to be obtained, of what was heard from the beginning.

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And though I shall not attempt the leading any to *St. Peters* Chair, nor beg that *Rome* may be the place of Umpire; because there is no need of fetching water from *Tiber* when we have clear Fountains at our own doors: yet reason must force this confession, that since it is not the letter, but the sense, of Scripture that is the proper Guide of life; there must be allowed some Interpretation, since our demands to one another may be the same with the Eunuch to *St. Philip*, how shall we Read without some Interpreter? And then the last question will be who are those that are most likely to exhibit to us the exact design of Scripture Phrase, and the infallible Rule that leads to Life?

To produce therefore some conclusions touching this controverted, and difficult, Question; Those must certainly best inform one of the meaning of a Sermon, that have had the most familiar acquaintance with the Preacher; Capacities also to apprehend, and Fidelity to deliver what they have received from the mouth of the Orator: upon which proposition those persons,

sons, that seem most rational, attempt the proof of the Apostles Writings that are but the first Commentaries upon that Gospel which our Saviour Preached and Ushered into the World. From hence (secondly) it follows that the persons who were the immediate Disciples to those Holy Penmen of Sacred Writ, having the advantages of Converse, and the benefit of Audience, must of necessity be the fittest Judges of what is Controverted in matter of our Religion, which we pretend to derive from their Books and Writings : and there seems to remain nothing to be doubted, but either their Capacities to receive, or their Faithfulness to deliver, what they heard from the beginning. Their Capacities and Parts their Writings publish ; their Integrity and Honesty their Lives declared ; neither had they either reason, or advantage thus to cheat, or impose upon, the world. And therefore those Writers, who lived in the first Ages of Christianity, are first to be believed ; that in difficulties and straits we are to have recourse unto ; and consequently the later to be less confided in,

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as having met with greater and more subtle opposition, and therefore subject to more intermixtures of heat and passion; and like Rivers, the further off the Fountain, the less do they retain of their first purity, and the greater mingling of different waters. As the nearer we are to the Fountain therefore, the clearer will the Stream be; so the nearer we Travel to that which was heard from the beginning, the more certain and infallible will our Guide and Rule be. But because the reports and sayings of Fathers are like melted Wax that receives the Image suitable to the Seal which makes the impression; and persons of divers Churches, and Persuasions, deal with their Sentences, as young Sophisters with a Text of *Aristotle*, by a distinction, or a figure, force them to countenance the various Sentiments of their disturbed minds: If we rest here, we shall still be as far from the end of Controversie, as the Controversie from the beginning of Truth. To proceed further then, by the assistance of those means our Reason dictates, together with prayers and humility of mind, to

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the investigation of what we are to rest in, as that which was from the beginning. A General Council would quickly determine it, did not an Empire now Canonized; the opposite Interest of Princes among themselves; diversity of Factions sprung up among their Subjects; the great Prejudices that are in the world; and above all, over grown Popery, clearly obstruct its Justice and Freedom; and I might say, its Possibility too. As every Episcopal Church, therefore, was Planted, at the first, Independent of another; yet, to preserve a Church Catholic upon Earth, admitting an Universal Union, Correspondence, Advice; and, by consent, an Obligation upon particulars, by Authority from the whole. Every particular Episcopal Church had a power of Discipline as well as Doctrine, committed to her trust and managery; the first Planters conveying downward, through a Sacred and uninterrupted Succession, their Authority and Jurisdiction to this Age, and this Church, to which we now pretend a Relation. In Controversie and difference (as the

the Case now stands with us) there can be no Example, or Rule, or more Rational Pattern, or Guide of Action, than that of the Primitive Planters of the Gospel; which is, that the Inferior be regulated by the Advice and Authority of the Superior, and all submit to the reasonable resolution of a National Council. Thus when the great dispute about Circumcision was raised at *Antioch*, the Metropolis of *Syria*, they Appealed to *Jerusalem*, to which *Antioch* was subjected, being a place of Superior Jurisdiction; and the determination of the Bishops of *Judea*, with *Paul* and *Barnabas*, Representatives of *Antioch*, fully silenced any farther Dispute, and was the infallible sentence in which they acquiesced. *Acts* 15.

But now, let not any men wonder that I call the Sentences of such Councils Infallible; since 'tis only using a Popish word, to express Protestant sense, to our selves, which overthrows the *Roman* claims over us. For this being applied to our Councils here; our Church neither erring in Fundamentals, nor pretending to usurp

upon the Natural Priviledg of mankind to judge for themselves as far as they are capable; but only assists and helps their Understanding in what they are deficient for want of Education; creating no New Articles of Faith: nay imposing nothing on the belief of any, but what the Scriptures have Authorized before; and Ordaining nothing by its own power, but a limitation of the outward actions of men: its decrees in things that are thus the subject of human Laws, are either to be actually obeyed, or not publicly or tumultuously contradicted. And this is what I intend to be the sence of the Infallible Sentence of a National Council, without which, Controversie can never be ended, no Legislative Authority maintained, nor Peace and Order remain among us. For want of this moderate and sober apprehension of things, men make themselves lyable to those Penalties of Laws which good natured Magistrates so unwillingly inflict, and well meaning Christians pity, and at the same time admire the Confidence of those who are so hardy, and willing

willing to deserve them; especially when they consider, also, that the same persons can be tamely silent, in Forain Countries where Principles of Religion more severely contradict the Sentiments of their minds.

'Tis true, indeed, a Council may err, unless they could put off their manhood, or to every decree have a fresh Inspiration, or receive a Divine Testimony from Heaven; and yet it is to us Infallible; (*i. e.*) to silence our open Disputes against it, and to be the Rule for our External Obedience. For frail men cannot possibly proceed farther in the searching out Divine Truths, than in the means, and way to find out the Revelation; and to understand it when it is found; leaving other indifferent things to the determination of those who have Authority over us: and those means that I have mentioned seeming to be all that Reason and Discourse, when not disturb'd by Lunacy or Enthusiasm, are able to propose; and since the only Evidence we have to prove the objects of sense against the bold denial of a confident *Sceptick*, is to call

in many, against the obstinacy of one, to give Testimony to what we see, or hear; and so to decide the difference betwixt us: If I err with submission to that Authority which I find the ultimate mean to determine, my Crime, certainly, will not be so great, but a pardon will as necessarily attend it; since the most gracious God does not require my action to be beyond the Sphere of my capacity; nor my apprehensions to exceed the Powers of my being. But the Authority of Councils, as hitherto stated, may seem too naked to be submitted to; and yet we observed in the first times, a ready obedience to their decrees, when backed by no Secular Power: If therefore they were obliging then, they engage us by another addition, and are strengthened by a Civil Sanction. For as, when the Emperors became Christians; what was before Established by our Saviour and his Apostles, and asserted by Pious Bishops, and Divines Congregated for that purpose, and drawn into Sacred Canons, or Rules, received a Sanction from the Legislative Power resident on Earth; and

and were so embodied with Imperial Laws, that the Magistrate was *Custos utriusque Tabulae*: so the Protestant Church, among our selves, has its Foundations, in the Word of God, (derived downward from prime Antiquity) so inlaid with the Temporal Laws of our own Kingdom, that the one cannot be invaded with Triumph, but the other nods; nay totters, till it falls into inevitable ruine; and we need not a new Experiment to shew it. This every one, at length, believes, that is not, by being engaged in past mischiefs, an enemy to both, and like *Cataline*, resolved on future evils to justify, or secure, those that are past. But they, more distinctly, are acquainted with this, who are Learned in the Laws, than we, who being Divines, are willingly supposed ignorant of them. Yet this seems to be the great Reason why such as design to invade the Crown, make a pass at the Miter first, because the Church is a Guard to the Palace, as well as the Palace a defence to the Church. Till this therefore be wounded, or removed, the disturbers of the Peace
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of both, cannot, in probability, ascend the Throne, nor place a Duke of *Venice* there.

But, to return from this digression; a National Council ought more especially to determine the Controversies among us, so as to oblige us to Peace, because their Decrees are our own Acts, having chosen the persons who represent us in it. Yet to silence doubts, and scruples, about this matter: whatever regard we may all have to tender Consciences, that are not raw; the different thoughts of Worship among us, being such as produce squabble and contentions, these, for our necessary ease and pleasure, dividing us into separated Clans; and these making us fit for Conspiracy, which, without any more Devils than our selves, may advance it self into an actual Rebellion: And when various, and severe Contests about Religion have openly distinguished men from each other, till they are hardly able to know themselves; when private Dispensations, shall, in some cases, vacat Publick Oaths by single Interpretations, and in Equivoca-

tions,

cations, and Mental Reservations men are able to out-strip the Jesuit himself; this is a way to remove the Pope, only by bringing him into our own Bellies, and instead of a Union of Protestants among our selves, is the direct way to introduce Popery in Masquerade (that I may use some Rhetorical words) and to imbrace what we declame against, and every Protestant is bound in his own capacity, to withstand. But when Trade and Occupations determine our Option, and past Acts (though evil in themselves) must regulate our present, and future, deportment: when persons chuse their Articles of Creed, as well as various ways of Worship, suitable to what they gain from those with whom they seem Religiously to associate: Conscience and Christianity do no longer guide them, but they give away their choice to Clients, Trade, and (amongst Divines) to the preferments of this World; and, all this while, 'tis Earth becomes their Supreme God, and Secular Interest governs their Religion. When Affairs therefore, through our own indis-

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cretion, or the wickedness of others, are brought to this pass, that men will violate their Oaths to preserve Religion, or neglect Prayers to serve God; or attend Prayers to serve the Devil, and when, by such methods as these, the Prologue is made to the dismal Tragedy of a general Confusion, 'tis time to call for a solemn Consultation and for a Christian Magistrate to interpose by Law; least the Disorders in what we call by the Ancient and Venerable name of Religion, may have too severe an influence on the State, and both be ruined by the same hands; since these are like *Hypocrates* Twins, that weep and laugh both together. 'Tis time therefore (at such a Season) to call upon our sleeping Laws to awake, whose Penalties have an equal Sanction with themselves: and more especially, because punishment of Extravagant Offenders can be no Persecution, when the Christian Religion is not concerned, but the various Interests of this World; and Penalties (in this Case) will only restrain the inordinate Affection of some men to their private Concerns

Concerns in relation to their abode here; and teach them how to be Crucified to this World, that they may more easily ascend into Glory in the next. 'Twill keep them steady whilst they walk upon the Earth, when the Wings of their Ambition are clyp'd and pois'd; and cause them to grow better, by Religion, and Loyalty; that by a peaceable departure out of this Life they may enter into the Joy of our Lord. This (though, to some, it may seem severe) can be no violence offered to Conscience, where we plainly see there is none at all. 'Twill be at most, no more than a limitation of Trade and Covetousness, by restraining the Contentions and Ambition of mankind. And now, if upon all this Discourse, a carping *Protestant*, or angry *Romanist*, should blunder upon this Objection; that if the Church be infallible, *quoad nos*; so it was at the time of our withdrawing from the *Roman* Communion, and therefore we then breaking the Principal Bond of Truth and Union, must remain guilty of the greatest Shism, unless we return to that

Church from whence we have departed. It is, without any difficulty, replied, that he supposes that granted which we will not yield; for we were never lawfully subject to the *Roman* Church, in respect of Spiritu-als, any more than we were to the late Monster of Traytors, in respect of Tem-porals: a prosperous Usurpation giving them no better Title over our Church, which was distinct at its first reception of Christianity, than the others possession gave him right to his Sovereigns Throne; both being effected, by Subtilty, Force, and Usurpation.

Thus having, through this Discourse, exhibited a great Character of Truth, which is prime Antiquity; and given some slender account of what has been heard from the beginning: All that remains is to in-force the Apostles Exhortation to the du-ty, and beg that ancient Truths may a-bide in you. We have now had the Tryal of all things, let us therefore hold fast that which is good: we have been too long tossed in a storm, but having at last, ar-rived at a safe Harbour, let us no more fail
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out among the Rocks, nor put to Sea whilst the Winds rage, and the Waves roar. The True, Ancient, and Apostolick Faith was, for some time, like the lost sheep; it wandered about in a Wilderness of Error, and the by Paths of Heresie and Schism, being torn and scratched with Briars and Thorns, not only till it was smeared with blood, but at last it became Naked Truth: Naked, indeed; for being void of Hypocrisie, it became Naked of Friends too: But now, since we have found the lost sheep no wonder that I Exhort you, as he did his Friends in the Gospel; *Rejoyce with me for I have found the sheep that was Lost.* And since the search has been no less tedious, than in these times, full of hazard; let us no longer shift the Principles of our Religion, nor permit the wry Face of a man to draw our Souls and Bodies asside; but let those Truths abide in us which we have heard from the begining. Why should I use any Rhetorick to persuade, when there is the Authority of God to command? *Tacitus* informs us of *Cæsar's* Soldiers; *Imperium potius quam concilium sequebantur*; A word of Command was more:

more to them than persuasion or advice in a formal Speech. And shall we that march under our Saviours Banner be more disobedient than a Heathen Militia? Why should we not for Edification submit to true Decency and Order, that we may no longer be like *Samaritans* and *Jews*, refuse kinder Correspondences with each other? As the Apostle therefore Exhorts those *Jews*, who, though dispersed, were united in Christian Faith and Discipline: so let me, with all Charity and Affection beg, that you would hold fast your Profession (*Heb. 4. 14.*) Can we reasonably part with the Glorious Gospel which promises Crowns and everlasting Rewards; that takes care of us after we are Dead, and leaves us neither in Purgatory or the Grave; nay, that free us from the Torments of Hell, and advances us to the Joys of Heaven: We cannot once depart from our Religion, but at the same time we abandon our selves, exchange our Reason for Folly and Madnes, and barter our precious Souls for trifles; and what proportion in this exchange? *What is a man profited*

profited (says our Saviour) nay, how is a man utterly undon if, *to gain the whole world, he loses his own soul?* (Matth. 16. 26.) Understand what you are capable of apprehending, and when you have found a Doctrine to be sound, take St. Pauls advice to Timothy; *Hold fast the form of sound words,* (1 Tim. 1. 13.) Many of our fierce and staring Seperatists, like their Ancestors of another denomination (the *Papists* I mean) embrace Principles and Ways of Worship, though they understand them not. As *Quintilian* speaking of the *Toscan* Rights and the Soothsayings of the *Salian* Priests, *Vix Sacerdotibus suis intellecta, sed quæ mutari vetat Religio.* Scarce apprehended by their Priests themselves, but yet their Principles and Religion forbid a change. But that Gospel which has been heard from the beginning, is no Airy Doctrine to be condensed into a Cloud; nor so hot, as to be raised into a Pillar of Fire: we are not to be conducted as the *Israelites* were of old; nor, thanks be to God, and a Christian Government, is the Church yet in a Wilderness condition; our Principles are as Plain

Plain as Honest ; and our Religion as Intelligible, as it is Rational ; and the Doctrine and Discipline, if our Practice Corresponds, which the Church of *England* pretends a reverence for ; by Gods blessing, being submitted to with meekness, will be sufficient to save our Souls, through him who first published it to the World, and died to make satisfaction for our sins. Let this therefore abide in you ; that you may not be, like Waves of the Sea, always rolling, and driven which way a Storm pleases ; but settled, and immovable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord ; which let God Cooperate and strengthen you in, for Christ Jesus's sake ; *To whom with the Father and his Eternal Spirit, be all Glory, and Honour, now, and for ever. Amen.*

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